

Docket No. F-9138

Ser. No. 10/582,076

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 and 10-16 remain pending in this application. Claims 1-7 and 10-16 are rejected. Claims 8 and 9 are previously cancelled. Claims 11, 17 and 18 are cancelled herein. Claims 1, 12 and 13 are amended herein to include the subject matter of claims 11, 17, 18 and 19.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 10 and 12-16 are rejected as obvious over the Jokipii reference in view of the Donn reference under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Claim 4 is rejected as obvious over the Jokipii reference in view of the Donn reference and further in view of the Stephenson reference under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Claims 11 and 17-19 are rejected as obvious over the Jokipii reference in view of the Donn reference and further in view of the Walker reference under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The applicant herein respectfully traverses these rejections. For a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) to be sustained, the differences between the features of the combined references and the present invention must be obvious to one skilled in the art.

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Each of independent claims 1, 12 and 13 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 11, 18 and 19 relating to the following feature as recited in claim 1:

the proceeding means is configured to receive time extension operation information from a participating terminal unit to effect extending the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by a specified time amount, and the proceeding means extends the tile discarding time for the participating terminal unit by the specified time amount in response to receiving the time extension operation information if a number of times the time extension operation information is received from the participating terminal unit is equal to or less than a predetermined number of times.

The extension of the time for discarding a tile is a feature of the present invention that provides an *exception* to the relationship between the time discarding time and the rank of the player previously recited in claims 1, 12 and 13. This feature adds an unpredictable element to the operation of the game system and method.

In the Office Action, it is averred that the feature of prior claims 11 and 17-19 of extending the discarding time is disclosed in paragraph [0111] of Walker et al. (US PGPub 2004/0162130). A review of the Walker reveals that a system and method for facilitating an extension of a time-based element in a game of chance is shown. The relevant portion of the Walker reference reads as follows:

[0111] In an embodiment where players may request time extensions at any time, the primary or secondary game screens, or other output devices, may be instructed by the processor to output

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an offer to the player to extend a time-based element. Such an offer may be provided at the beginning of a game, or periodically or continuously thereafter. Players may accept such offers at any time by initiating a signal to the processor via an input device operatively connected thereto, by inserting payment into the gaming device's payment system, or both. For example, a textual offer, based in part on information retrieved from a player tracking database, may be communicated via the secondary game screen upon commencement of a prepaid session. Such an offer may read: "Mr. Smith, you can pay to extend your prepaid session at any time before the end of the session by depositing additional payment. Insert \$5 for an extra 30 minutes, or \$10 for an extra 70 minutes. Good luck!"

According to the disclosure in Walker et al., a time for playing a game as a whole can be extended if a player satisfies a predetermined condition such as a random event which occurs during the game, payment of fee for extension, and etc. In other words, the "time extension" disclosed in Walker et al. does not intend to extend a time limit corresponding to a *play or move* in the game. It intends to extend a time limit for playing *a game as a whole*.

In contrast, the "time extension" recited in claim 11 does not extend the time limit for playing a game as a whole. Instead, the claims require an extension of a time limit for a given play or move, i.e., discarding a tile, which is merely one of many actions performed during the game. Therefore, contrary to the teaching in Walker, the claimed feature does not extend the end of the game as a whole. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the feature of the "time extension" previously recited in claim 11, and now recited in each independent claim, is not

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taught by the mere time extension of a game as related in the Walker reference. Furthermore, it will be observed that the time extension related in the claims, in some degree, destroys the concept of the discarding time which is defined in claims 1, 12 and 13 and associated with the rank of the player. Therefore, allowing an exception to the discarding time defined in the claims provides an *unpredictable element* to the feature of the discarding time and does not follow naturally from the subject matter of the independent claims. Hence, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed combination is not rendered obvious by the applied references. Reconsideration of the rejections of the claims and their allowance are respectfully requested.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

Applicant respectfully requests a one month extension of time for responding to the Office Action. Please charge the fee of \$130.00 for the extension of time to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

If there is any discrepancy between the fee(s) due and the fee payment authorized in the Credit Card Payment Form PTO-2038 or the Form PTO-2038 is missing or fee payment via the Form PTO-2038 cannot be processed, the USPTO

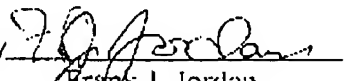
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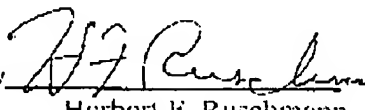
is hereby authorized to charge any fee(s) or fee(s) deficiency or credit any excess payment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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